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UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CAN RELIGION BE TAUGHT?

THE INAUGURATION

OF

GEORGE ALBERT COE, PH.D., LL.D.,

AS

SKINNER AND McALPIN PROFESSOR OF
PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

NOVEMBER SIXTEENTH
1909

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Professor George Albert Coe, Ph.D., LL.D.

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THE INAUGURATION
OF
PROFESSOR GEORGE ALBERT COE,
PH.D., LL.D.

I.
THE INAUGURATION SERVICE.

The Inauguration of Professor George Albert Coe, Ph.D., LL.D., as Skinner and McAlpin Professor of Practical Theology took place on Tuesday evening, November 16th, 1909, at eight-fifteen o'clock, in the Adams Chapel.

The procession, consisting of the Seminary Choir, the Directors and Faculty of the Seminary, and representatives of neighboring seminaries, entered the chapel during the organ voluntary by Dr. Gerrit Smith, the Musical Director of the Seminary. The Lord's Prayer was repeated, followed by the Chant "Venite, Exultemus Domino." The Rev. Professor William Adams Brown, Ph.D., D.D., read the Scripture Lesson, from Ephesians iv., and the Choir sang, as an anthem, the "Magnificat" by Garrett.

The President of the Board of Directors, Robert C. Ogden, LL.D., made the following statement:

"On the 20th of April, 1909, the Board of Directors of the Union Theological Seminary, by unanimous vote, elected Professor George Albert Coe, Ph.D., LL.D., Professor of Philosophy in Northwestern University, to the Skinner and McAlpin Chair of Practical Theology. Professor Coe has accepted, and has already taken up his work here.

"The organic law of the Seminary, as amended after careful and prolonged consideration by the Board of Directors, and adopted November 15th, 1904, requires each Professor when entering upon the duties of his Chair to make a certain declaration immediately after the reading of the Preamble adopted by the Founders on the 18th of January, 1836. I will now call upon Dr. Francis Brown, President of the Faculty, to read the Preamble."

Dr. Francis Brown then read the Preamble as follows:

"PREAMBLE.

"That the design of the Founders of this Seminary may be fully known to all whom it may concern, and be sacredly regarded by the Directors, Professors and Students, it is judged proper to make the following preliminary statement:

"A number of Christians, both clergymen and laymen, in the cities of New York and Brooklyn, deeply impressed with the claims of the world upon the Church of Christ to furnish a competent supply of well-educated and pious ministers of the Gospel; impressed also with the inadequacy of all existing means for this purpose; and believing that large cities furnish many peculiar facilities and advantages for conducting theological education; having, after several meetings for consultation and prayer, again convened on the 18th of January, A.D. 1836, unanimously adopted the following resolution and declarations:

"1. *Resolved,* in humble dependence on the grace of God, to attempt the establishment of a Theological Seminary in the City of New York.

"2. This Institution (while it will receive others to the advantages it may furnish) is principally designed for such young men in the cities of New York and Brooklyn as are, or may be, desirous of pursuing a course of theological study, and whose circumstances render it inconvenient for them to go from home for this purpose.

"3. It is the design of the Founders to furnish the means of a full and thorough education, in all the subjects taught in the best Theological Seminaries in the United States, and also

to embrace therewith a thorough knowledge of the standards of faith and discipline of the Presbyterian Church.

"4. Being fully persuaded that vital godliness well proved, a thorough education, and a wholesome practical training in works of benevolence and pastoral labors, are all essentially necessary to meet the wants and promote the best interests of the kingdom of Christ, the Founders of this Seminary design that its Students, living and acting under pastoral influence, and performing the important duties of church members in the several churches to which they belong, or with which they worship, in prayer-meetings, in the instruction of Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes, and being conversant with all the social benevolent efforts in this important location, shall have the opportunity of adding to solid learning and true piety, enlightened experience.

"5. By the foregoing advantages, the Founders hope and expect, with the blessing of God, to call forth from these two flourishing cities, and to enlist in the service of Christ and in the work of the ministry, genius, talent, enlightened piety and missionary zeal; and to qualify many for the labors and management of the various religious institutions, seminaries of learning, and enterprises of benevolence, which characterize the present times.

"6. Finally, it is the design of the Founders to provide a Theological Seminary in the midst of the greatest and most growing community in America, around which all men of moderate views and feelings, who desire to live free from party strife, and to stand aloof from all extremes of doctrinal speculation, practical radicalism and ecclesiastical domination, may cordially and affectionately rally."

Mr. Ogden then continued:

"I now call upon Professor Coe to make the required declaration."

Professor Coe then made the required declaration, as follows:

"I promise to maintain the principles and purposes of this Institution, as set forth in the Preamble adopted by the Founders on the 18th of January, 1836, and in the Charter

granted by the Legislature of the State of New York on the 27th of March, 1839, and accepted by the Board of Directors on the 20th of December, 1839."

[The Charter is a simple Act of Incorporation, of which only the following section refers to the educational work of the Seminary:

"§ 5. Equal privileges of admission and instruction, with all the advantages of the Institution, shall be allowed to Students of every denomination of Christians."]

Mr. Ogden then said:

"Having been chosen by the Board of Directors a Professor in this Seminary, and having made in this public manner the declaration required by the Board, I now declare Professor George Albert Coe, Ph.D., LL.D., duly inaugurated Skinner and McAlpin Professor of Practical Theology, and as such entitled to discharge all the duties of that office in this Seminary."

Prayer was then offered by the Reverend Professor Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.

Mr. Ogden said, further:

"It is the custom of this Board to appoint one of its members to deliver on its behalf a charge to a Professor on his inauguration, and the Board has appointed the Reverend Anthony H. Evans, D.D., to deliver the Charge to Professor Coe."

The Charge was then delivered by the Reverend Dr. Evans, of the Board of Directors, after which Professor Coe delivered the inaugural address on the theme: "Can Religion Be Taught?"

The hymn, "Crown Him with Many Crowns," was then sung by the choir and congregation, and the service ended with prayer and the Benediction by the Reverend Professor George William Knox, D.D., LL.D., after which the procession retired from the chapel.

II.

THE CHARGE TO PROFESSOR COE.

By the REVEREND ANTHONY H. EVANS, D.D.,
of the Board of Directors.

My Brother:—On behalf of the Board of Directors, I welcome you to this school of sacred learning and to the high responsibilities to which you have been called in connection with its teaching force.

Your good name and worth have preceded you and have made for you a place in our esteem. We rejoice in the valuable services you have already rendered the cause of religious education. We congratulate ourselves upon your talents and attainments, upon your character, and upon the spirit and the energy with which you have hitherto labored. As a thinker you have proved yourself eminently capable and useful; as a teacher you have had a large experience and marked success; as a writer you have been diligent and illuminating; as a Christian man you have commanded the utmost respect and confidence. Manhood and teaching ability, experience and a stable consecrated purpose, all permeated with the spirit of Christ, make a personality of power and of sure usefulness. Because we believe that you are of this choice order of personality, we joyfully exalt you to a place of instruction in this Seminary. We are confident that you will make it a place of inspiration for all the men who come under your teaching and influence.

The atmosphere into which you come will be congenial to you. It is an atmosphere of sincerity and frankness, of mutual respect and brotherly affection, of moral and spiritual earnestness. Your associates will be men of like ambition with yourself, intensely devoted to the promotion of God's kingdom

upon earth, lovers of the truth, and zealous and fearless in its pursuit and proclamation. The utmost freedom will be accorded you in the exercise of your gifts, for we know your wisdom and are assured of your loyalty to the best traditions and highest interests of the Seminary. You will live and work in a place of serenity, where your personal happiness will be conserved and your teaching power be unhampered.

You are to be congratulated upon coming to the Seminary at this opportune time. We have passed through a critical period in our history. We have survived in honor and in strength all controversies, and from all parts of the country and the world students in large numbers are coming to us with trust and eagerness. We are no longer on the defensive, save as it is needful for us to correct misunderstandings and to make clear our position in a spirit of candor and conciliation. We have arrived at a constructive period in our career, a time when all the energies of our directing and teaching force may be concentrated upon the one great object of our existence, the preparation of men for the work of the Christian ministry. We are in closer fellowship with the churches as a whole than ever before, and in greater harmony with that particular part under whose blue banner many of us are glad to serve. We are deeply and intensely interested in the church as representing the body of Christ, and we desire and shall aim to command its perpetual respect and affection. The fraternal spirit and the better understanding and the broader sympathy that now characterize our ecclesiastical relations make this a fortunate moment for the beginning of your service with us.

The wider outlook which now is unfolding before the Seminary enhances the content of your opportunity. We are soon to be housed in new and commodious buildings. Their beauty and enduring strength, their extent and completeness, may fitly represent in material form the fact of our past development and of our expanding usefulness. The heights to

which we move shall mean for us more than eminence where we shall be seen and admired. They shall mean, so God will, a clearer vision of Himself, a larger knowledge of His truth, a higher and nobler conception of His love and purpose, a fuller realization of His Saviourhood in Christ, more sympathetic and adequate understanding of the needs of humanity, and a preparation and consecration commensurate with the needs. You are here in time to take part in a notable constructive and aggressive work, to be carried on under the most favorable circumstances.

An old Scotch woman having heard Robert Murray McCheyne preach was asked what she thought of his preaching. After hesitating a moment, she replied, "The man preaches as if he was a-dyin' to have you converted." The church needs today more preachers of this spirit, men of deep and abiding earnestness, not hysterical, nor nervous, nor merely energetic, but aglow with spiritual enthusiasm, concerned for the well-being of humanity, passionately eager for the regeneration of individuals and of society. Professor James asserts that while science may belittle personality, in the realm of religion it is "the one fundamental fact." Phillips Brooks declared that preaching was "the bringing of truth through personality." It may not be in your province to teach the art or the uses of personality, but your position will give you ample scope for the arousing of personality and for the increasing of its power. The times demand a ministry free from dullness of heart, from indifference, and from lukewarmness, a ministry characterized by the utmost zeal in the prosecution of its supreme mission.

Along with the need of genuine earnestness in the Christian ministry, there is need also of positiveness. Strong convictions must accompany emotions if the emotions are to be of a substantial and lasting character. It is difficult, if not impossible, to be earnest and doubtful or uncertain at the same time. If I rightly judge the present attitude of society

toward religion and religious institutions, it is, to a certain extent, a waiting attitude. There is a suspense of judgment arising from uncertainty and a consequent lessening of confidence. The continuation of this state of mind is inimical to the cause of religion. It is incumbent upon the church to sound a positive note, to make sure of what it believes, separating the non-essential from the essential, to re-state with fresh force and new interpretation and convincing assurance the great fundamentals of our holy religion, thus relieving the minds of the people from the depressing and harmful effects of uncertain knowledge, and re-establishing and increasing their religious confidence. We must be re-vitalized with the spirit of Paul when he said: "I know whom I have believed." We are persuaded, my brother, that you will contribute largely to this end, the training of men who shall have a definite, strong and positive message, that shall command credence and carry conviction, and produce results.

The Christian ministry attains its object only when it is characterized by effectiveness. To prepare men to be effective preachers and teachers, then, is the paramount duty of a theological seminary. The curriculum, the special lectures and courses, the conferences, intellectual and spiritual, the work for Christian culture and social betterment, the life of personal relationship between professor and student, all should be consciously directed toward producing the maximum of practical effect in advancing the Kingdom of God. Religion must be so taught and so preached that it shall not only create a sense of its value, and win intellectual assent to its propositions, and please the æsthetic and devout nature, but quicken and control the conscience, bring the soul into conscious and vital fellowship with God, and cause it to forsake all forms of sin and to follow after righteousness. The presentation of religion in and through Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Spiritual Leader of mankind, must do more than produce admiring and adoring disciples who bear His name; it

must produce Christ-like character in the individual and a Christ-ruled society.

The spiritual blindness of multitudes, the moral obliquity that shames our civilization, the inordinate craving for the material at the expense of the ideal, the widespread godlessness, besides the sufferings and sorrows of countless millions that cry for love and justice, call for a religion of divine power. We have such a religion in the religion of Christ. But we must make it effective. The value of the church as an instrument of religion must be finally determined not by its truths or formulas of truth, not by its institutions or its ideals, valuable as those are, but by its effects in the moral and spiritual transformation of humanity.

You are called to the Chair of Practical Theology in this Seminary that you may use your experience, your personal influence, and your splendid intellectual and spiritual equipment to teach religion in such a way as will make it effective in the establishment of the rule of Christ, which is the will of God.

We wish you joy in your labors, and the constant presence of the Master to comfort, sustain and direct you. We confidently expect great things from you, and we shall follow your course with vital interest and affection.

III.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

By PROFESSOR GEORGE ALBERT COE, PH.D., LL.D.

CAN RELIGION BE TAUGHT?

Socrates the teacher and Aristotle the psychologist investigated, each from his own point of view, the possibility of teaching virtue. They came to opposite conclusions. Socrates, holding that the essential condition of virtuous action is to see clearly what is good and what evil, insisted that virtue can be taught in and through the careful definition of ethical notions. Aristotle demurred to this. "We learn an art," he says, "by doing that which we wish to do when we have learned it; we become builders by building, and harpers by harping. And so by doing just acts we become just, and by doing acts of temperance and courage we become temperate and courageous." . . . . . "It is by our conduct in our intercourse with other men that we become just or unjust. . . . . In a word, acts of any kind produce habits or characters of the same kind." "But most men," he remarks, "instead of doing thus, fly to theories, and fancy that they are philosophizing and that this will make them good, like a sick man who listens attentively to what the doctor says and then disobeys all his orders. This sort of philosophizing will no more produce a healthy habit of mind than this sort of treatment will produce a healthy habit of body." The function of reason in morals, he believes, is to discover the means for attaining moral ends; but the search for means implies that the ends have already been accepted as one's own. Now, the acceptance of moral ends implies moral appreciation, which Aristotle also describes as perception of what is fitting.

Hence, the teaching of morals presupposes moral responsiveness in the pupil, or the love of what is noble and hatred for what is base. Therefore the Stagirite goes so far as to declare that "Nothing but a good moral training can qualify one to study what is noble and just."

How modern are these ancient Athenians! For, have not our teachers, in schools of both church and state, assumed that to teach is to communicate a set of defined ideas, and that such ideas are the groundwork of character? And have not our psychologists objected to this assumption almost precisely as Aristotle did? The training of character, they say, consists in the formation of social habits, and social habits are formed, not by reflection, but by action in society. Even those who would go behind action to its springs in feeling and appreciation were also anticipated by Aristotle.

Close to the center of our religious consciousness to-day there is arising in new form the old problem with which Socrates and Aristotle struggled. Can religion be taught? There was a time when this question was not raised; in large sections of Christendom even now it is not raised. The young are drilled in a set of formal notions, rigidly connected by a logical bond, and fixed in memory by proof texts or other formulas, and this is assumed to be the teaching of religion. This assumption represents, of course, an outgrown notion of what teaching is. The science of education demonstrates the impossibility of transferring mature notions to the child mind by memory drill. The pupil understands only that which is somehow woven into the fabric of his own experience. Even if it were possible, moreover, to transfer knowledge by the mechanics of memory, religion could not be thus transmitted. Religious life reaches down into depths of feeling and impulse that our concepts can represent, but never create or fully control.

The extraordinary increase in the range and accuracy of theological investigation in our time might lead us to look for

increased emphasis upon the intellectual phase of religious education. Certainly there is a vast mass of information in the possession of scholars that must somehow become the common property of the people. Yet, on the whole, the effect of enlarged theological knowledge is to emphasize the more vital, less easily formulated phases of religion. The men who have dug deepest into the mines of history and criticism know that religion has its springs deeper down than all the processes and all the products of critical scholarship. Whereas scholars of other days assumed that their formulas of the faith are the essential means for guiding the young into the Christian life, the modern sciences that deal with religion would no more claim to hold the key to the Christian life than physiology would claim to possess the key to digestion. Both the standpoint and the results of modern theological scholarship unite with the science of education in declaring that the teaching of religion, if it is at all possible, must be something very different from passing on from generation to generation the lifeless symbols of religion. Formulated ideas we must have, of course; they are a necessary phase of any experience, religious or other, that deliberately organizes and propagates itself. Only as we heed the wisdom of the past can we escape a narrow individualism or a shallow "up-to-dateness." It is a grievous error, offensive alike to the historic spirit and to the principles of teaching, to suppose that religious education can get on without definite analysis of religious ideals. Progress never moves toward the formless. The task of the present, rather, is to restore the unity of the living experience and the formula in which it defines itself; and this is necessary not only for adult thinkers, but also for the children whom we would instruct. A genuine connection with the past can be maintained only on condition that beliefs generate themselves ever anew within the present experience. The pupil understands an historical notion only as he himself goes through some of the experiences that it represents. Thus real teaching

must assume that the pupil himself lives at the sources whence formulated beliefs proceed.

Such considerations tend to check the assumption, which grew out of a less vital conception of religious belief, that of course religion can be taught. To memorize facts and formulas, however sacred they may be, is not to learn religion; to teach about religion is not to teach religion; mere instruction no more conveys religion than it conveys health.

Realizing this principle more or less clearly, progressive teachers have begun a search for concreteness in religious teaching. The object to be studied, they perceive, is primarily the substance of religion; that is, men and women who are religious. Sunday-school instruction is being transformed by this conception. In the earlier grades the imagination, which is the chief instrument of the small child's understanding, is taking the place that memory-work once held. The story, which reflects concrete life as nothing else can do, is now the recognized type of material for children under a dozen years of age. Yet this change, fortunate as it is, brings troublesome questions. For example, on what basis shall the stories be selected? A few teachers take the ground that the Bible stories are *per se* the ones that the children need. Accordingly, in some Sunday schools little ones are told about a snake that talked human language, a rib that became a woman, and a man who gave the animals the names that we call them by. The art with which these old stories are presented is sometimes admirable; and surely any child is fortunate who comes to maturity with his imagination thus enriched. But is this telling of stories, even biblical stories, the teaching of religion? Wherein does the child make religious advance through this or that group of stories? Can it be shown that this method brings real religion nearer than did the old memory method?

In the advanced grades concreteness of material is sought by utilizing some of the products of the historical study of the

Bible. The growth of religion in Israel, its blossoming in Jesus, the expansion of Christianity into a world religion—this is a panorama of absorbing interest. Biography and history bring welcome relief from the ancient formalism. They have values of many kinds. But our problem is a more serious one than that of conveying historical knowledge. Indeed, all our improvements in material and method of teaching only add emphasis to the question of our religious effectiveness. Yes, our material and our methods are both improving, but have we found out how to propagate the spirit of Jesus? Even the best equipped teacher is likely to falter in the presence of this question. We can teach about religion, its history, institutions, doctrines; but can religion itself be taught?

Some of the reformers who feel this problem are saying with Aristotle that religious character depends not upon the acquisition of certain ideas, but upon acts repeated until they become habits and produce a stable character. Therefore it is proposed that instruction be accompanied by and expressed in a graded series of good works from the kindergarten of the Sunday school to the adult classes. The value of this plan cannot be disputed. One of the weak places in our teaching has been its relative failure to turn idea into action. For the want of action, often what seemed to be knowledge was not knowledge at all, but only a memory formula which, though it had a name to live, was dead. Lack of action always means that vital processes, not reaching their goal, lose their vigor. Moreover, though the pupil could know all knowledge and all mysteries without habits of religious activity, still he would be nothing. If our youth fail to take strong hold of spiritual realities, it is partly because religious belief has seemed a passive thing, only indefinitely or even repressively related to the energies of youth. When every fibre of a young person calls for activity, we cannot make religion real except as we reveal it in and through action.

Yet there are difficulties even here. Though adults may be able to express and to deepen their own spiritual life through some specific form of social service, it is not easy to provide a continuous and progressive scheme of such activities for all the grades. And even if we devised such a curriculum of activities, would it have sufficient breadth to accomplish our purpose? For the chief activities of the pupil are in the home, on the street or playground, and in the school, and the problem of religious training includes them all. Merely to induce a new habit or two apart from these main fields of interest is not enough; and such habits, whether speaking in a young people's meeting, or participating in a liturgical service, or even seeking out some sick person to whom one may carry flowers, may lead, because of their isolation, to misconstruction of the meaning of religion for life.

Moreover, how is it at all possible, by control of particular activities, to purify the springs of life? Do we not need to be lifted above *our* thinking and *our* willing into a greater life that acts through us? Surely the ancient doctrine of the new heart has significance for education. For it has in it something of human nature that is at least as deep as the notion of producing religious life by training in religious habits. Can religion be taught in any such sense as implies that the springs of action can be deliberately controlled? Must not religious life, in this deep sense, be waited for, as we wait for the showers that water our fields?

Let us listen, then, to what the mystic has to tell us concerning the teaching of religion. The essence of religion, he assures us, reveals itself in certain transcendent moments, when all our ordinary powers are superseded; what we have acquired by learning or by habit no longer operates or influences us; we are then alone with God, and he himself breathes into us the breath of life. This, and this only, it is said, is spiritual life. It comes, not by transmission through teachers, but by infusion from the divine life. There is no other way to

know God. Teachers can only tell about God, they cannot make us acquainted with him ; they can train us to produce the outward symbols of religion, but the will has no genuine spiritual life until it has been renewed through the vision of God. In other times mysticism has disparaged religious education. One can learn more in a moment of divine illumination than all the schools can teach ; one can acquire by a single stroke of divine power a fulness of Christian character that makes mere faithful effort seem prosaic and second rate. So it has been believed, and it cannot be denied that instances of sudden illumination and transformation have been abundant, even to our own day.

The mystical view of religious education offers peculiar enticements. If it were true, how it would lift burdens from parents and from the church! If the real work is to be done by direct divine power, if we are not even instruments of it, then our function as religious educators is only to arrange certain preliminaries of the divine self-manifestation. We are, perhaps, to train the young to church attendance and such other habits as will put them in the way of divine influences; we are, perhaps, to awaken expectation and promote passivity; but, having done this, we are to wait for the opening of heaven. If the outpouring does not come; if our pupils, by the time they reach the age of seventeen, drop out of the Sunday school, lose interest in the church, and show little fruitage from our efforts, we are not to hold ourselves responsible. We are to prepare the ground, even sow the seed, but the fruitage is a matter between God and the individual pupil. Where this view prevails, the revival is commonly superadded to the work of teaching; superadded as though it were of a different genus, and generally as though it were a channel of divine grace in a sense in which the teaching of religion is not.

Teaching seeks to bring the pupil to a certain goal by a process that has interconnected and interdependent parts. Mysticism, in its strict form, insists that religious experience,

at least at its best, dispenses with such mediation. If this is true, if there is no essential connection between our religion and that of our ancestors, between an individual's present experience and his own past, then, indeed, religion simply cannot be taught.

Behold, then, our perplexity. To communicate knowledge of religion is not to teach religion; to train the young, in addition, in religious acts and habits is not to teach religion unless the ultimate springs of action in feeling and impulse be reached and controlled; but these seem least amenable to any such deliberate process as teaching. But if, to relieve this difficulty, we suppose that divine power steps in and does the work directly, then the whole notion of teaching religion vanishes!

This is not a theoretical cobweb, but a practical difficulty. It confronts us in every characteristic religious task of the present. Is there a mass of new knowledge to be assimilated by the churches? The greatness of the task lies not in the necessity of reversing habitual modes of thought, but of carrying over to the new generation the religious values that were associated with the old doctrines. We need an education that will perpetuate a solemn conviction of the seriousness of life and of the awful difference between right and wrong; that will bring the pupil to victory over self and sin, and to glad consecration to the kingdom of God on earth; that will make the soul know God as a refuge in trouble, and awaken in it the joy of the sons of the Highest. This, rather than Biblical fact or doctrinal idea, was the real religion of the fathers, and this is what any effective religious education must hand on.

If we turn from the task of assimilating knowledge to that of social reconstruction, we meet the same problem. Education is the instrument whereby society must develop its ideals. Yet the chief obstacles to social well-being acquire their power most of all from the selfishness that profits thereby. The inertia of institution and custom is in large measure the

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inertia of the heart. Social regeneration, then, must consist, fundamentally, in the socializing of desires, motives, and purposes. Justice can never be firmly established through any combinations or permutations of selfishness, but only through such control of the inmost man as the fathers had in mind when they declared that only a new heart can produce a new life. Our dependence must be upon education, but can education do the work?

Is it, then, the supreme task of to-day to secure a new outpouring of the Divine Spirit, a fresh realization of God's immediate presence? Even so, our practical problem is the same. For the effectiveness of any such inspiration depends upon its continuity, and ultimately upon its being communicated from man to man. Human lives are interconnected as never before; ideas and sentiments diffuse themselves with unprecedented speed. Though this makes it possible for revivals to reach greater numbers than ever before, it also subjects them to a new test. The facts are spread out before a larger public for its judgment; the larger consciousness constantly presses into every corner of the religious experience, demanding to be informed, and insisting upon estimating everything from the standpoint of a possible universal human meaning. Doubtless the chief need to-day and always is a fresh inspiration, but more and more the effectiveness of any inspiration, and therefore the proof of it, depends upon its ability to propagate itself by the universal and continuous processes whereby peoples consolidate their ideals, that is, by education.

The supreme test of the church, therefore, concerns her ability to teach religion; the supreme challenge of the modern world to religion itself lies in the question—Can religion be taught? All the difficulties that beset the church in the modern world focus here. The church cannot go forward unless she can communicate the dearest treasures of the Christian experience by deliberate, regulated, continuous processes based upon the laws of the human mind.

My acceptance of the call with which this Seminary has honored me implies, on my part, a conviction that the church can meet this test, and above all a conception of religion that makes necessary an affirmative answer to the question that has been proposed. To explain, much more to justify, this conception would require an excursion into the psychology of religion and of teaching that the occasion does not permit. I desire, however, to express, in a series of brief and unsupported propositions, what seems to me to be the main line of approach toward a positive solution of our problem.

FIRST.—The approach as a whole must be psychological. That is, we must seek in the religious experience, and especially the Christian experience, for universal laws and functions of the human mind. For teaching moves wholly within such laws. It relies upon them as the sower who goes forth to sow relies upon other laws for the desired harvest. To teach religion, then, implies that religion is natural to man, and that no wall of partition separates religious values from other values, religious experience from other experience.

In the path of the theological student there lies, perhaps, no subtler snare than the comfortable notion that the church's dealings with men concern a special faculty of the soul that has peculiar laws of its own. This is the way to a distorted outlook, and to an abstract rather than a concrete mental habit. Though one who holds such a notion may thereby secure influence with persons who have strong temperamental inclinations toward a particular type of experience, with equal certainty he will erect a barrier between himself and the world at large, and he will never appreciate the teaching function of the church.

It augurs well for religion, therefore, that a great awakening of interest in the psychology of religion is now taking place among ministers of this and other countries. One of the immediate results, it must be confessed, is the utterance from pulpit and printing press of psychological hearsay or

half knowledge in astonishing amount. Such initial clumsiness in the handling of new tools is natural enough, but it adds the emphasis almost of emergency to the need for a scientific psychology of religion and for training theological students therein.

The psychology of religion, rather than the methods of religious teaching, requires the prime emphasis. For the importance to the minister of a knowledge of improved methods and materials of religious education is obvious enough. Whatever particular functions the pastor exercises in his own person, upon him in the main lies the responsibility for what is taught in his church, and for effective organization and methods of teaching. He must know what constitutes good teaching, and in the reorganization of religious education that is now upon us he must be able to lead his parish. Nevertheless, mere pedagogical lore will not suffice for his need. Fundamental to any wisely thorough reorganization of the educational work of a church is knowledge of religion in its psychological aspects. Without this there can be no comprehension of the specific goal proper to religious instruction, and no adequate test of results.

Second.—Only a mind that is already religious can be taught religion. Not only must religious experience be thought of in terms of universal mental laws, but also whatever is specific in the religious aspiration must be already germinally present in the ultimate will-to-live that keeps the mental machinery going, or religion can never be taught. For teaching cannot reveal values toward which the mind does not spontaneously strive. A teacher cannot import any absolutely new interest into the mind ; he can only intensify an interest already there, or extend the application of it. Aristotle is right: The teaching of virtue presupposes virtue in the pupil, and the teaching of religion presupposes religion in the pupil.

The notion that the mind is spontaneously religious is not strange to Christian thought. It is approximated in Paul's

assertion that God is not far from any of us, because in him "we live, and move, and have our being;" likewise in the reference in the Fourth Gospel to a light that illumines all men so that, when the Logos comes to humanity, he comes to "his own." Tertullian declared that the soul is naturally Christian, and Augustine's "Thou hast made us for thyself," restates and extends the principle. In modern times we hear of God as an immanent presence impelling men to the whole struggle for self-realization. We merely complete these conceptions in the psychological direction when we maintain that human consciousness as such is religious consciousness. Any difficulty that we may find in this notion is not likely to arise from the thought of the divine transcendence, but from the homely look that religion now assumes. Religion now appears as a phase of the whole struggle for existence. Our thought of it is controlled no longer by the logical analysis and synthesis of speculative metaphysics, or by any inference from the eternal counsels of God. Rather, religion—the essence of it—is to be looked for in the dust and noise, the sweat and the blood, or, as the case may be, the music and the laughter of our actual living. Religion is continuous with whatever makes human life human, and because of this continuity it can be taught.

THIRD.—Religious ideas and beliefs arise within religious experience as a phase of it; their primary function is to make our highest appreciations and strivings definite and self-critical, and this primary function is their only religious function. It follows that religious ideas can be kept alive, and religious confidence find a permanent ground, only in an experience that can be ever renewed. It follows also that religion can be communicated by means of theological ideas only on condition that they are held to this, their primary, function. When they are abstracted from the values, experienced or hoped for, that give religious experience its character, we may have teaching about religion, but not the teaching of religion.

Socrates was not mistaken, it is true, when he asserted that teaching consists in helping the pupil to define his ideas; the Socratic dictum is unsatisfactory only because it permits us to think of definition as an abstractly logical procedure. Socrates' own teaching, in fact, was better than his theory of teaching. He had no conspicuous success in making ethical definitions; there is no Socratic system of ethics. But he produced something better than definitions in that he led his pupils to criticize their own incomplete moral purposes. Indeed, the real essence of the Socratic method of teaching virtue is the stimulation of the will by means of self-evolved definition of its purposes. This method applies to the teaching of religion, and the possibility of it makes the teaching of religion possible. In religion, above everything else, ideas are ideals; they are known and believed in only by being appreciated. To teach religion is to stimulate the pupil to feel religious values, to strive for them, and to make them definite by the appropriate use of concepts derived from the parallel experience of other generations.

FOURTH.—The ultimate appreciations on which religion depends can be stimulated by teaching because of the fundamentally social nature of human consciousness. It is a commonplace of religious education that the most influential factor in character-development through teaching is personal intercourse between pupil and teacher. In numberless instances it has saved otherwise poor teaching from failure. But the personal element, instead of being fully incorporated into our notion of what teaching essentially is, has remained for the most part, like the revival, as something superadded to teaching. In the meantime psychological investigation has made untenable the once universal notion that the individual mind is a self-closed unit that comes into social relations or not according to circumstances. Human consciousness is social consciousness. All our ideas and beliefs are social products; our inmost feelings and impulses are socially conditioned; even our arrival at

individual selfhood has depended upon the interplay of social forces. Teaching, therefore, when it seeks to mould the individual in his inmost self merely undertakes to do deliberately what all of us are constantly doing unconsciously. Teaching is therefore one phase of the propagation of social life by social forces.

FIFTH.—The problem of teaching religion is therefore a part of the general social problem, and the pre-eminent teaching power of the Christian religion rests back at last upon its pre-eminence as a social gospel. When men love one another the idea of God becomes meaningful and convincing. We can teach a religion of love if we ourselves love enough. This means not merely that teachers must love their pupils. For the teacher, however inspired he may be, is still a representative of a group; he is an instrument as well as a creator of its social ideals, so that his ability to teach religion depends in part upon the corporate life of the church. If the corporate life of the church should once measure up to the social standard of the gospel of Jesus, the teaching of the Christian religion would become easy.

The advance movement in religious education introduces nothing new into our religion. When we plead for religious education by sound methods, we ask only that the Christian motive of love work itself out through its most natural channel; we ask only that the social principle of Christianity shall have an adequately social method for propagating itself.

Because I believe, not only that religion can be taught, but also that the inmost heart of the religion of Jesus must express itself in teaching, I reverently assume the duties of this chair. I conceive the teaching of psychology and education in this Seminary as a part fulfilment of its original and living purpose, and for me as the obedience of the Christ.

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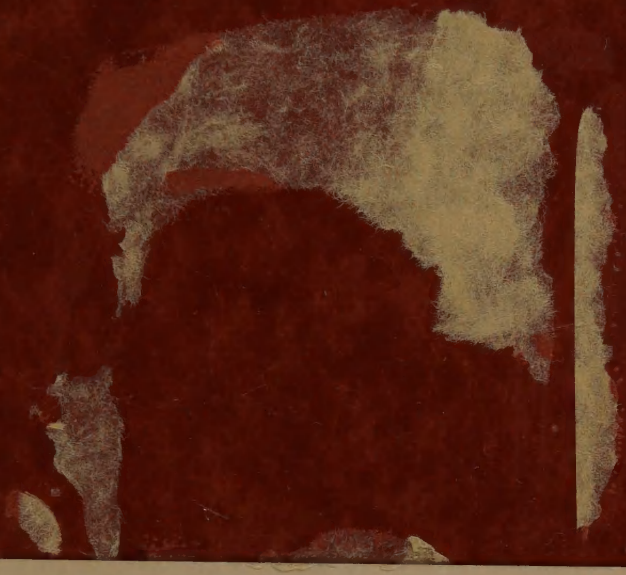

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